Chapter 8

OPERATION MARKET

— BRINSON'S HISTORY —

Operation Market Garden consisted of two components: air assault "Market" and ground assault "Garden"] The mission of the troop carrier groups in Operation MARKET was to transport airborne forces to the Arnhem-Nijrnegen area of Holland. The task of these airborne forces was to seize vital bridges and hold them until relieved by the British Second Army driving north through Eindhoven.

The flight routes selected for the operation were ones which planners hooped would avoid most anti-aircraft fire. It was known, however, that both heavy and light anti-aircraft guns were in the Arnhem and Nijmegen areas, and at the landfall point at Schouwen Island.

Prior to the mission, there was no specific training program, no rehearsal, and no exercises. Part of this was attributed to bad weather, and the other part to the constant expectations of other missions. When the 315th learned that the missions to be flown by the Group were paratroop missions, most of the glider pilots and glider support personnel were attached to other groups in the 52nd Troop Carrier Wing.

On 14 September, the troops of the 504th Parachute Infantry Regiment ((PIR) 82nd Airborne Division, moved onto the base. At the first mission briefing, it was learned that the 315th's first destination was Drop Zone "O," located about three miles southwest of Nijmegen, and one-half mile north of the Maas River. Two serials, of 45 aircraft each, were to be used to airlift 1,240 paratroopers and 473 parapacks. The route to the target was to the east coast of England at Aldeburgh, then 94 miles across the North Sea to Schouwen Island. From Schouwen Island, it was approximately 90 miles to the drop area. On the morning of the first MARKET mission, hundreds of Allied bombers and fighters dropped over 3,000 tons of fragmentation bombs on suspected anti-aircraft sites along the troop carrier routes.

There was four to eight [in eighths] cloud cover, with bases at two to three thousand feet, and visibility of at least seven miles when the planes began taking off from Spanhoe at 1039 on Sunday morning, 17 September. This weather remained about the same until the planes returned.

The serials, led by Lieutenant Colonel Dekin and Lieutenant Colonel Gibbons, formed in the usual "V of Vs" and joined the other stream of troop carrier traffic moving toward Holland. Shortly after passing the Dutch coast, the 34th Squadron's C-47, #308, piloted by Captain R.E. Bohannan, was hit by flak. The left engine and one of the underslung parapacks were seen burning as it went down near Postbahn van den Stadscherdike at Fifnaart. Sergeant T.N. Carter, the crew chief parachuted to safety, but was captured by the Germans, along with 15 paratroopers who had been on the plane. (Most of the latter had been wounded.) Captain Bohannan, Lieutenants D.H. Felber and B.P. Martinson, and Staff Sergeant T. P. Epperson were killed.

Ground fire increased as the formation neared the DZ and seven 315th planes were hit, although American Thunderbolts and Mustangs, along with British Spitfires and Tempests, were active in the attempt to suppress ground fire.

Seventy-eight of the planes dropped their paratroopers near the target, but most of the eleven "sticks" of troopers, whose jump area was south of the Maas River, landed 500 to 1,200 yards short of their zone. The jumpmaster in the lead aircraft was observing the ground from the cargo door while approaching the river and the bridge, and ordered the paratroopers to jump before receiving the green light from the pilot. It was later learned that the troops who landed on both sides of the river captured their objectives within three to four hours.

On D+1, 18 September, two serials of 27 planes each left Spanhoe to drop troops of the British 4th Parachute Brigade on DZ "Y," northwest of Arnhem. On this day, eleven aircraft were damaged and two were shot down before reaching the drop zone. Lieutenant Tucker's plane (34th Squadron) was hit and began burning 16 miles short of the target. Lieutenant Tucker ordered the aircraft to be abandoned. (Four days later, Tucker and his crew of Lieutenant D.O. Snowden, Technical Sergeant W.W. Durbin, and Staff Sergeant W.E. Hewett returned, having evaded capture.) The paratroopers on this plane landed near Bennekon, Holland

Lieutenant J. H. Spurrier's aircraft, flying on the right wing of the 43rd Squadron C. O., Lieutenant

Colonel Peterson, began burning near s'Hertogenbosch. It was learned later that when the crew chief, Corporal Russell Smith, saw fire inside the front of the aircraft, and received no response from the pilot's compartment on the interphone, he ordered the troops to, jump, and he and the radio operator followed them from the aircraft, jumping at extremely low altitude. All who parachuted from this plane landed near Opheusden, between the Waal and Rhine rivers. Lieutenant Spurrier was unconscious from a wound he had received and was unable to jump Lieutenant Edward S. Fulmer, the co-pilot, although burned on his face, back and arms, saw an open field, and crash landed the aircraft in an attempt to save Lieutenant Spurrier. The plane's wing struck a power line tower, slid along the ground, and burst into flame. Lieutenant Fulmer was able to escape through a side window. Lieutenant Spurrier and Corporal WT. Hollis, the radio operator, died of injuries received. Corporal Smith was hidden by the Dutch Underground for several weeks until he was taken to a U.S. officer working with the underground, and subsequently to Eindhoven and safety. After being returned to Spanhoe for a few days, Smith was returned to the U.S. (Aircrew members who had contact with the "underground" in occupied countries were not permitted to fly in the same theater of operations.) For attempting to land the stricken aircraft and save the pilot's life, Lieutenant Edward Fulmer, who himself was hospitalized with serious burns, was later presented with the U.S. Distinguished Service Cross and the Order of William by the government of The Netherlands.

On this mission to Arnhem, the crews reported seeing no friendly fighter suppressing flak after reaching the Initial Point (LP.) for the run to the drop zone. The 315th was scheduled to drop the Polish Parachute Brigade on 19 September, but all 52nd Troop Carrier Wing missions were canceled because of the weather. One half were to fly with the 3I5th, and the other half with the 3I4th, stationed several miles away, at Saltby. The weather was already turning out to be worse than forecasted for this period of the operation and on the following day the Polish lift was again canceled. The weather in the English Midlands just prior to take off time at Spanhoe on D+4, 21 September, was one to two miles visibility and clouds in layers from 150 feet to 9,000 feet. No one seriously believed the mission scheduled for this day would go; however, the urgency of the British 1st Airborne Division's position as Arnhem determined that a mission should be chanced.

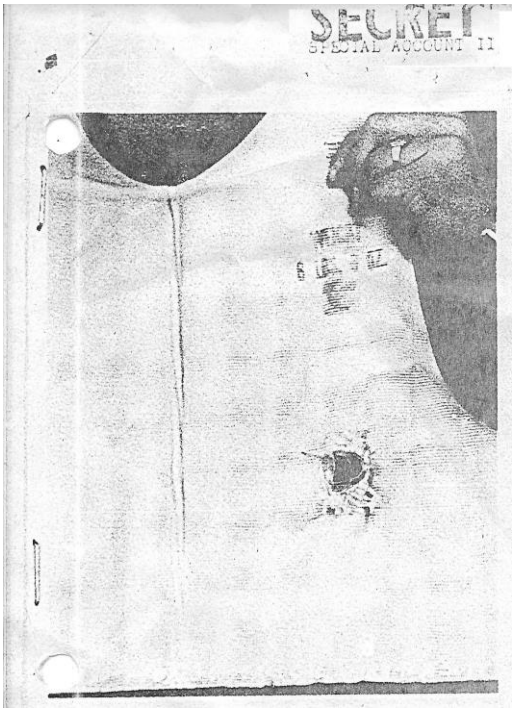
The first serial of 27 aircraft left Spanhoe at 1310. Because of the limited visibility, instructions were issued to assemble at 1,500, an altitude believed to be above the haze layer. The first serial made up of planes from the 43rd and 34th, assembled and started on course but soon found itself in dense cloud. The formation dispersed and attempted to reform above the clouds. Two pilots broke into the "clear" and tacked onto a serial of the 314th Troop Carrier Group.

The second serial of 27 planes, made up of planes for the 309th and 310th Squadrons and led by Lieutenant Colonel Stark, 309th CO., began taking off from Spanhoe at 1427. Two planes turned back because of the weather. The others in this serial climbed individually through the overcast to above 10,000 feet, where they assembled above the clouds. The formation remained at this height and pressed on toward the Belgian coast where the clouds began to thin. Descending to 1,500 feet, the formation made its way to the drop zone northeast of the town of Driel, some two miles southwest of the town of Arnhem.

The serial arrived at its destination just after 1700 hours. Considerable light flak was encountered as the DZ was approached and several planes were hit. In spite of the flak, all planes dropped their sticks at altitudes around 800 feet. The heavily burdened Polish paratroopers took longer to leave the planes than estimated. This fact prevented the formation from turning as soon as planned. As a result, when the formation turned over the town of Elst and it flew into severe flak. One pilot later remarked that "It looked like a pinball machine gone mad." The planes in the formation, already at low altitude, dived for the treetops in an attempt to escape the withering enemy fire and return safely to Allied lines. Five planes in this formation were shot down and others landed that night in Belgium or southern England because of plane damage or deteriorating weather.

Lieutenant Colonel S. C Stark was hit in the chest by a fragment of flak. He later stated that there was no doubt that the flak vest he was wearing saved his life. Lieutenant Kenneth Wakley's plane (#612), from the 310th, was hit and crashed. Lieutenant Wakley's crew consisted of Lieutenant Bruce Borth, co-pilot; Lieutenant

M.C Beerman, navigator; Technical Sergeant Magnus Ludvikson, crew chief; and Staff Sergeant Carl Javorsky, radio operator. All but Beerman and Ludvikson had gone overseas almost two years previously with the 34th Squadron. Lieutenant Borth and Sergeant Javorsky had returned from leave in the U.S. only ten days previously. All were killed.



(Above) Scan of microfilm photo of "Smylie" Stark's flak vest (not in original edition of the book). Note bullet hole just below and to the right of his heart.
Photo from USAF History Office archives

Approaching the DZ, the pilot of another 310th Squadron plane, Lieutenant Cecil Dawkins, was wounded in the face and head when the plane took one, or probably two, flak bursts. One of the fuel tanks in the port wing began burning and the flames swept down the left side of the fuselage. Moving his plane out of formation slightly, Lieutenant Dawkins dropped his troops on the DZ and then ordered the crew to bailout. Lieutenant Cleon Worley, flying co-pilot on this mission, Lieutenant J .R. Wilson, the navigator, Technical Sergeant W. O. Witte, Jr., the crew chief; and Staff Sergeant J. Ludwig landed safely and made their escape with the assistance of Dutch civilians. The members of the crew reported that they did not see Lieutenant Dawkins leave the plane.

Several years after the war, in a letter to a friend, Lieutenant Dawkins provided additional information about his experience. He recalled that he gave the order for the crew to jump, and while he was attempting to leave his seat and follow them, there was an explosion just under the cockpit flooring. When he regained consciousness, Lieutenant Dawkins was aware of being on the back of a German tank rolling down a blacktop road. At a first aid station where he was given some attention for his head and leg wounds, an English-speaking German nurse told him that the German tank crew pulled him from the river after his plane exploded and they saw him thrown into the water with no parachute.

After seven to ten days in a prisoner-of-war interrogation center, Lieutenant Dawkins was escorted to Stalag Luft One [German prisoner-of-war camp] on the Baltic Sea. In January 1945, along with two other prisoners, Lieutenant Dawkins attempted to escape. Only he was successful; one of the orders was caught by the guard dogs; one was shot and killed. Two weeks later, Lieutenant Dawkins made contact with an advancing Soviet armored reconnaissance unit with whom he remained for several months until a British unit was encountered during the last few days of the war. For his courageous action under enemy fire on 21 September, Lieutenant Cecil Dawkins was later .awarded the Distinguished Service Cross by his country and the Order of the Bronze Lion, which was presented to him by the Queen of the Netherlands. [Note: The 315th first learned that Dawkins was a POW and not killed in the plane crash when Lieutenant Charles Lovett received a dipping from a Memphis newspaper. It was immediately tacked on the squadron bulletin board.

Lieutenant Jacob Boon's 310th aircraft was struck by enemy fire after the Polish troopers jumped and later crashed in the drop zone area. The remainder of the air crew, which consisted of Lieutenant W.H. Borneman, Technical Sergeant D.E. Couch, and Sergeant L.J. Chambers, were wounded. All were brought to safety by friendly forces. Lieutenant Boon was awarded the Silver Star for assisting his wounded co-pilot from the crashed plane before the plane exploded.

Lieutenant Colonel Hamby, 310th C.O., landed at Brussels with a severely damaged aircraft rudder and two wounded men aboard - Sergeants Harrod and Combetty. When a count was made, there were 150 holes in the airplane.

As Sergeant James and Corporal Doan, the crew chief and radio operator on the plane piloted by Lieutenant O.J. Smith, attempted to pull in the "static lines" after the paratroopers jumped, both were wounded. Corporal Doan was bleeding profusely. Lieutenant Smith put the plane down at Eindhoven to get immediate medical attention. This aircraft had the right rudder control shot through and had over 600 holes in it. Both Doan and James survived their injuries.

Captain F.K. Stephenson's plane was riddled by flak and was burning as he skillfully crash landed it in a wooded area. Stephenson, along with his 309th crew of Lieutenant P.B. Garber, Jr., Lieutenant E.E. Arnold, Technical Sergeant J.Y. Berotti, and Staff Sergeant E.S. Maxwell, escaped serious injury.

C-47-6132, another 309th plane, crewed by Lieutenant E. E. Biggs, Lieutenant WL. Pearce, Lieutenant T.R. Yenner, Technical Sergeant R.W. Abendschoen, and Staff Sergeant G.G. Herbst burst into flames when hit by flak and exploded when it crashed into the ground near Elst. None of the crew survived.

A 43rd Squadron C-47, piloted by R.O. Cook, received several hits when returning along the Brussels corridor. With all hydraulic pressure lost and fuel tanks almost empty because of flak damage, Lieutenant Cook made an emergency landing at one of the Brussels airports. Having no brakes, the plane narrowly missed crashing into several parked aircraft and finally came to a stop against a hanger. The crew escaped uninjured.

On D+5, the weather prevented any take offs from Spanhoe but the following day, 23 September, D+6, 41 aircraft led by Lieutenant Colonel O.H. Peterson, 43rd Squadron C.O., transported the 560 Polish paratroopers and the 219 parapacks that did not reach the objective on D+4. Arrival over DZ "O", the drop zone for that day, was at 1643. All 315th planes returned without damage, although another group flying over the same drop zone a few minutes previously had been hit hard by enemy ground fire.

A few days after the initial assault, a good grass landing field had been located two miles west of the town of Grave. When obstacles around the field were removed, there were 4,200 feet of usable landing area - exactly the same length as the shorter runways at Spanhoe. First Allied Airborne Army decided to fly in the 52nd British Division and land on this strip on the 26th.

The 315th sent 72 planes in two serials, led by Lieutenant Colonels Mandt and Lyon, to transport an anti-aircraft battery and units of a Forward Delivery Airfield Group. In addition to men, the cargo consisted of jeeps, trailers, small anti-aircraft guns, ammunition, rations, gasoline, and motorcycles. Take off time from Spanhoe was 1130 when the earlier bad weather had cleared as predicted. Spitfires and Mustangs were sighted as the group's air cover when the formations of C-47s neared the European coast and these fighters remained with the troop carriers to the landing strip. No enemy planes got through to strike at the congested landing area, but 40 Luftwaffe planes were intercepted several miles east of Grave by an Allied lighter group flying area patrol. Thirty-two enemy planes were reported as having been shot down.

After landing, the transports were unloaded and sent off as rapidly as possible to make way for succeeding serials to land. The constant pressure of the German forces caused the Arnhem position to be abandoned on the night of 25 September. An estimated 1,130 British and Polish airborne troops were killed on operation MARKET GARDEN and another 6,200 were captured. Approximately 3,500 men for the American 82nd and 101st Airborne, C-47s landed at Grave between 1350 and 1740 and brought in 657,995 pounds of combat equipment plus 882 men. Occasional ground fire was encountered on the approaches and return routes, but no 315th planes failed to return from this airborne landing mission.

Divisions were listed as killed, wounded or missing The 315th had eight airplanes shot down and six other receiving major damage. All objectives but the bridge at Arnhem had been achieved, but without the key bridge over the Rhine, the operation had failed. All troops, both airborne and troop carrier, had done all that they could do, but it was not enough.

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OPERATION MARKET
— CHOLEWCZYNSKI'S "VOICES" —

17 SEPTEMBER 1944

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

The 34th Squadron began emplaning the paratroopers and their combat equipment about 0800. The departure order issued to each flight commander was to assemble their three C-47s in combat formation and to join the group at the assigned altitude and course heading as part of the vast armada advancing along the narrow flight corridor that extended three hundred miles as it proceeded toward the drop zones in Holland.

After joining the stream of Allied aircraft along the corridor our group then diverted and followed the northern flight route to the objective at Grave, Holland.

2nd Lieutenant. Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

Only the commanding pilot leading a formation had the luxury of looking around. All other first pilots in the formation never took their eyes off the airplane that they were lined up on. It was up to the co-pilot to be the eyes for the first pilot. In addition to keeping an eye on what was going on in the air, on the ground, and the rest of the formation, the co-pilot kept checking the fuel tanks and fuel gauges to see if anything was leaking, and watching the temperature and pressure gauges. This would show if we suffered any hits from small arms fire. In addition, the co-pilot had to keep an eye on the gyros for the autopilot, and make sure that they stayed lined up. This was important because the only way the people in front of a C-47 could get out was to engage the auto pilot, and hope to hell that you could get your parachute on before you ran out the back door of the airplane.

When you were some 20 minutes out, the pilot would get out of his seat, put on his helmet and flak vest, and locate his parachute and made sure it was close to hand. It was impossible to wear parachutes in the cockpit. When the pilot again took control of the airplane, it was the co-pilot's turn.

2nd Lieutenant Glenn A. Ulrich
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

The morning of September 17, 1944 dawned beautiful. We were part of a section of a dozen aircraft that would drop troopers of the 504th Parachute Infantry on the other side of the Maas River from the main drop zone, so the paratroopers would be able to seize the bridge from both ends.

This was my first combat operation, and I was looking forward to it. This is what you were trained for. Takeoff was normal, and there was nothing unusual until we were over Holland. When we made landfall, a Typhoon was shooting up a German gun position on an island, and then I saw an Me-l09 heading for the North Sea with a P-51 on either side of him at fairly low altitude. They went by pretty fast but I don't think the ME-I 09 got anywhere. That was reassuring.

Inland, a flight of P-47s was strafing a German convoy and its troops trying to find cover in a ditch. They were having a field day as they made multiple passes. We were listening to the "Berlin Bitch" on Radio Berlin when she announced in English that airborne landings were taking place in Holland. We were the tenth serial flying in and that announcement did make your pucker string tighten up a bit.

2nd Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

We were flying fairly low and I saw fighters making runs on flak positions and flak towers, but they didn't get it all. My pilot, Jack Olds, kept his eye right on the airplane next to us in our formation while I saw the stuff floating up in an arc.

1st Lieutenant Monroe Zartman
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Approaching Holland's North Sea coast, nearing the offshore islands puffs of gray and black smoke prompted me to wonder if I should be sitting on three flak vests instead of two. We were close enough to hear the popping noises that came with each burst of flak.

But why worry? The brass already had us scheduled to be back over these German flak batteries tomorrow when we would be dropping the red-bereted blokes of the British 4th Parachute Brigade at a DZ northwest of Arnhem.

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

As we approached the coastal area of Holland and flew over Schouwen Island, patches of antiaircraft and

small arms fire developed, with exploding shellfire filling the sky with flame and black smoke. Shattered spent flak impacted against the fuselage with thumping, ringing sounds. Shimmering tracers snaked up from below, resembling oversized fireflies in flight. As we reached the island's east side, streams of glowing red tracer came arching up from the left, passing the nose of my plane. Glancing to the right I followed the flight of the tracers, and I caught a glimpse of flak bursting near the flight of C-47s slightly above and ahead of my flight. The lead plane was piloted by my Spanhoe roommate, Captain Richard Bohannan, and it appeared to be hit. One of the long parapacks slung from the belly of the C-47 was on fire. Black smoke and yellow flame spread under the fuselage.

I immediately called Captain Bohannan in the clear, repeating, "Bo, your para-packs are on fire and burning. You should get out now!"

2nd lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

My pilot never took his eyes off of the other airplane, and didn't know what the hell was happening. I saw the parapacks slung under Bohannan's plane burning. It looked just like firecrackers, sparkling. Things were exploding out of the parapacks. I always felt guilty that I didn't break radio silence sooner. That was the first thing that I noticed burning was the parapacks underneath.

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

A number of paratroops bailed out of Bohannan's plane, their parachutes billowing behind. I did not get a count. A white parachute stood out among the camouflage parachutes used by the paratroopers. After the paratroopers exited, Be's C-47 nosed down at a steep angle. I perceived that Captain Bohannan was attempting to extinguish the fire by diving the aircraft at a high rate of speed. However, the plane did not level off, and struck the flooded land below with a very visible splash. A moment later, a P-47 fighter passed through the formation directly ahead of my flight in a steep dive, crashing into the water, another victim of enemy firepower. In spite of the constant barrage of enemy fire, my flight and the rest of the 315th Troop Carrier Group proceeded toward the assigned objective without further mishap or casualties.

1st Lieutenant Charles Voegelin
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

It was a Sunday and it was an absolutely beautiful day. Going across the North Sea, one of the first things I saw was a British Hamilcar glider doing down. It was carrying a tank, and I saw it go right down into the water.

When we reached the Scheldt, a parachute on a parapack on the plane ahead of us opened up. That puts an awful vibration on the pilot. We always maintained radio silence and had to communicate with hand signals. It was always difficult to determine which parapack this was when this happened in this instance, it was the sixth, and last, parapack that was the offender. That stick of paratroopers would have to make due with what they had on them.

In our serial a C-47 went down in flames. These things happened so quickly. Flak was coming up from a position somewhere down there. I saw a P-47 Thunderbolt go down and strike them, and come up, and at the top of' his run, he hung up there and then went right down into the ground and crashed. He had put himself in a vulnerable spot. I think he was trying to make a high pass again, and they got him and he went right in. It was around noon. Below us it seemed to be a fairyland with all these people waving at us and going to church. I'll never forget that.

1st Lieutenant William E. Bruce
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

Bohannan was my flight leader and I'll never forget the day that happened. When **I** went overseas, **I** had a radio operator named Epperson.He was a big old boy and a good radio operator, my radio operator when we first came overseas. He played in the station band and **I** really liked him. When that plane got hit, **I** was flying on the wing. **I** think they hit the cockpit, and killed the pilot or the co-pilot or both of them, or disabled them, and hit the yoke of the airplane. They plane just took a70 degree angle and it was like somebody was flying it, not straight in, but nearly.

Sergeant Thomas N. Carter
Crew Chief, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

My location in Bohannan's aircraft was at the door so I could pull in the static lines after the paratroopers jumped. We were flying along and I was looking out the door and thinking about how pretty Holland was,

and hoping that I might visit it sometime.

The paratroopers hooked up their static lines and soon after that I heard some shots and one of the paratroopers feel to the floor. The next thing I knew I looked out the door and saw fire coming from the left engine. I picked up the microphone to tell the pilot the engine was on fire when the whole inside of the aircraft filled up with black smoke. I thought the paratroopers would jump out. I think one or two did, and then I went out the door. After we got on the ground I found out why no more paratroopers went out the door. The floor had melted out from under them.

I remember going out and hearing heavy machine gun fire on the ground. I landed on top of a house. My parachute went over the top and I went down the back side of the house. I looked up and saw my C-47 flying with fire and black smoke coming out. I do not know how far it flew before it crashed. The rest of the crew were in the front of the aircraft, and I think that they were trapped by the fire.

After we got on the ground I got together with the paratroopers, who all had burned faces and hands from falling through the burning floor of the C-47. We made contact with the Dutch underground. We went into a house on a road. The ground sloped toward water, and the front of the house was higher than the rear. We were there an hour when a German truck drove up and pulled across the road to block it. I was upstairs with a paratrooper, while the rest were on the ground floor.

A German walked towards the house, and threw a potato masher hand grenade at one of the windows on the ground floor, but missed. The grenade exploded on the ground, but the German was not badly hurt. One of the paratroopers tried to fire his rifle at him, but he was burned too badly to pull the trigger. The German threw another grenade. It landed in the room were the paratroopers were, but thank goodness it didn't hurt anybody. If it had been an American grenade it would have done a lot more damage.

We surrendered to the Germans. They lined us up on the road and searched us. Then they loaded us into trucks and took us to a schoolhouse for interrogation. We were there until dark, when we were taken to another location for more interrogation. They then took us to another school. We were there for six days until a doctor came. I had only suffered a cut finger but none of the burned paratroopers had any medical attention. We were thing sent to a first aid station in a large church. After two or three days, I was; separated from the paratroopers and began my time as a POW until the end of the war.

1st Lieutenant William E. Bruce
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

We were supposed to fly a pretty tight formation. They wanted the troop carrier planes to go by the drop zone in a short time and together. You don't have a lot of room in the formation in that kind of a setup. We had the fighter-bombers, and just the plain fighters, shooting up the antiaircraft positions on the ground. But they couldn't get all of them, and the flak started firing, the fighter pilots would spot the thing, and go shoot the thing
lip.

They had 20mm and 40mm anti-aircraft guns, but flying over the drop zone, the big stuff was shooting at us as well. There was a 40mm gun over to the right, about three miles away. This guy had me zeroed in. What he was doing he was leading me ... he wasn't trying to hit the airplane, he was trying

1st Lieutenant Monroe Zartman ("Ziggie")
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Just minutes from the DZ, both rows of troopers were already in the "stand and hook up" attitude, with crew chief Drysdale at the door, wearing a British quick release chest chute. The door hinges and any snag points were covered with duct tape as Fred waited for the green light, pulled in the flapping static lines, and waited for the radio operator to tell us up front to hit the throttles. We were low, slow and vulnerable to ground fire when in drop mode.

Co-pilot Don Hyder had the right side window open. He readied the grease gun from the escape and evasion kit, with extra magazines on his lap as I pushed the throttles forward and nosed down in a dive. I then quickly realized that the bridge had yet to be captured, and banked hard left, and circled back to observe our troopers hit the ground. They were right on the bull's eye, precisely where they wanted to be. Mission accomplished! There was no sign of the other eight aircraft participating in the drop, and no indications of enemy reactions. No flak, no ground fire. The DZ was quiet except for the scurrying paratroopers. The superstructure of the long, multi- sectioned bridge was clearly in sight. Beams of sunshine pierced the scattered

clouds shadowing some of the assembling paratroopers. I banked into a steep 180, rolled out, and then nosed down, and buzzed the grassy DZ. I waggled the wings to return the wild waves (and unheard yells) of these special men. everyone of them damned glad to be out of the plane that gave them the ride At 2,200 RPM and 33 inches, mixture full/rich, we headed west, back to England.

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

A thousand feet below, we saw many trucks and vehicles, including tanks carrying German soldiers, racing along the roads towards Nijmegen. As, we approached the drop zone, serious gunfire was again encountered. Flak and small arms fire filled the air with smoke, shrapnel and tracer. Hot splinters and metal rained down on the fuselage and wings. Visibility was poor as smoke from enemy weapons drifted across the drop zone. Despite this, we saw the smoke markers laid by the Pathfinders who had preceded our massed formation. As the green light flashed, the paratroopers quickly exited without any problem.

When the crew chief reported that the static lines were retrieved, I made a 180-degree descending turn as I pushed the throttles forward to gain air speed to give us a better chance against enemy fire. At a low altitude, below 500 feet, we were safe from antiaircraft fire, but were subject to small arms fire and camouflaged machine gun pits. As we went west across Holland, we spotted enemy troops hiding behind barricades and firing their weapons as we passed. Some hit the fuselage, leaving holes and dents. In the village streets and open roads below we also saw groups of Dutch civilians, waving flags and orange banners expressing their appreciation of our effort to free their country.

1st Lieutenant Jack E. Wilson ("Jake")
Pilot, 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

I had just gotten back from leave in the states, and since I had not flown for six weeks, I had to fly co-pilot. I had a Thompson submachine gun I had scrounged, and I told the pilot, "When we go back, as soon as we drop the paratroopers, get down low, and I'll shoot me a German on the way back out of Holland." He said, "OK."

We were going like hell across the countryside, just buzzing. I saw two people in gray uniforms walking on top of a dike, and told the pilot, "There they are, fly close to them and I'll shoot them." I stuck that submachine gun out of the window and started spraying bullets. My first burst came within ten yards of them, and as we got closer, and I lined them up in my sights, It turned out that it was an old man and a little boy, and they were going to church. They weren't Germans at all.

A lot of guys took a shot out of the airplanes. I'm so thankful, and I've been thankful all my life, I didn't hit them. I would have shot an old grandfather and a little boy going to church.

1st Lieutenant Monroe Zartman ("Ziggie")
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Low, directly over the Maas, with the Waal and Rhine rivers in the vicinity, things happened fast and furious. I banked jerkily to get a look at the barges, some moving, others moored to the river banks, all with lines covered with ragged laundry. I spotted a German soldier running toward the low- flying plane with his hands in the air, and banked toward him. Drysdale, thought I was going to land and take him prisoner, but it was my intention to scare the hell out of him.

Passing between widely spaced trees at the end of the field I suddenly saw communications wire strung between them heading straight for the windshield. A sharp pinging told us that the props had chewed them up and spit out the pieces. Some bits we later found in the engine cowls. The propeller blades had smudges from the insulation.

As we returned to the river, we surprised a three-man machine gun crew dug into the dike. Don got a quick burst before I banked to avoid a port an area undoubtedly heavily fortified with AA sites. Open water beckoned... the confluence of the Maas, Waal and Rhine created a great bay sprinkled width islands. The North Sea was straight ahead. We stayed low until the shore line was out of sight, and were well behind the offshore islands when we climbed to some 3,000 feet, reduced the power settings to cruise, and engaged GEORGE [the auto-pilot]. We could now relax and anticipate the hot cooked meal, warm shower and comfortable bed that awaited us at Spanhoe. " We wondered how the poor bastards back at the DZ - who would get none of the above - were doing.

With home visible in the distance, and the control

tower reporting "no other traffic," we buzzed the runway, curled back and landed. Tired, hungry and probably smelling musky, we debriefed and headed for the mess.

Munching on the fruit of the day, we went back to look at old 622. Aware; that early tomorrow we would lifting the British paratroopers, we checked the flak damage. Eight to ten .50 caliber holes, and maybe one or two of the larger, jagged holes from 20 mm, punctured old 622. None were of any consequence. Some the crew chief, Fred Drysdale, patched. Time was a critical factor, so others he just left temporarily to whistle in the slipstream.

The crew for 622 reported ready for duty at the early morning roll call on the 18th. The machine was patched, swept dean, test-hopped, refueled and pre-flighted. The crew was in dean underwear, rested, freshly shaven as they sat down to their heaping portions of SOS before heading out to the planes and wait for the Red Devils. The British were the kind of fighters you wanted to have on your side. Why, though, do they refer to our beautiful Gooney Birds with the lackluster name Dakotas?

18 SEPTEMBER 1944

As we were approaching the drop zone, one of the planes in the formation was hit, and left the formation under control, but completely engulfed in fire. It still looked like an airplane. I didn't watch long. I had to get back to maintaining formation. When I got back to Spanhoe, I reported that I saw it go in, hit the ground, and I didn't think that anybody could have possibly gotten out of it. I found out later that I was wrong. [See Appendix 5 – The Royalty of the 315th]

Charles Voegelin
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

I am normally a friendly person, and I did talk to some of the British paratroopers, but everyone was so damn tense, that I just wanted to get the mission over with. I always told the crew chief that if anybody freezes in the door, you kick him out. I never wanted to go back over the DZ again.

Crossing the Dutch coast the second day in a row, I was frightened. We knew what was coming up, and there was heavy flak as we approached the drop areas. You could feel it on the airplane. But you didn't see planes go down. I couldn't tell you what happened on the second day. I was the pilot, and had to concentrate on keeping formation. When the tracer is coming up, it all looks like it's coming at you.

2nd Lieutenant Glenn A. Ulrich
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

The takeoff was delayed. The weather wouldn't allow it. Our plane was carrying the commander of the British 4th Parachute Brigade, Brigadier Hackett. We had enough time on the ground that the brigadier came in and sat in the plane. I remember all these British colonels coming up, bracing and saluting. It impressed the heck out of me because Dawkins was a flight officer, Junior Wilson and I were 2nd johns, and Brigadier Hackett was so laid back. Maybe that was why we were so calm on that mission. He was a brigadier general, and he made us feel so much at ease, even though all the British brass were saluting him.

It was almost like being on a picnic, with the brigadier eating a boxed lunch. The crew chief, Sergeant Bill Witte, joked with the brigadier that all the others in the stick had guns poking out of their kit bags while he had a walking stick. Hackett remarked, "This war will be over some day, and we will all go back to being civilians, and we cannot let the war change our lifestyle." He explained to the crew that it was important that he be, "put down at the right time at the right place," pointing at a corner of a photograph of the drop zone. He wagered "the best bottle of Champagne I could get on the island," that we could not hit the drop zone.

I had been with the group only since June, but had flown most often with Dawkins. He was a former sergeant-pilot, and was a bit of a wild man. As co-pilot, I was busy. When we were going in, we passed a group of German trucks that the P-47s were strafing. We passed islands with flak coming up and Typhoons were strafing the heck out of them. You're as busy as a cat on a hot tin roof while you're doing this. You're interested in getting to where you belong. We got to the drop area, gave them the signal, and I looked in the back to our navigator, Jim Wilson. I thought we were there, but he held on a few moments, and then gave the signal.

Postscript

Brigadier Hackett was gravely wounded during the battle, and was taken as prisoner to a hospital in a private's uniform. A British surgeon performed delicate abdominal surgery under very difficult conditions.

Hackett later escaped and, helped by the Dutch, returned to Allied lines.

He did not return to civilian life until 1968, as a four-star general, and finally went back to academics as Principal of King's College, London. He published a number of books, including "I WAS A STRANGER," a memoir of his six months behind enemy lines in Holland.

In 1989 he was invited to Maxwell AFB for the annual "Gathering of Eagles." Also invited as VIPs were Glenn Ulrich and James R. Wilson, the only members of the crew still living. In front of the assembled crowd Hackett paid off the wager made in 1994 by presenting Ulrich and Wilson with a magnum of Champagne.

Hackett thanked the pair for dropping him within 200 yards of where he set up the brigade's command post. What was not mentioned was that when he landed, two Germans tried to surrender to him, but he would not accept their surrender until he found his walking stick, which parted company with him during the drop.

Until his passing, Hackett regularly corresponded with the pair, and Ulrich was his guest in Britain at a reunion of the 4th Parachute Brigade, and at the ancient mill that Hackett had turned into a home.

Captain Bernard Coggins
Navigator, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

I don't know what hell looked like, but I got a preview. Earlier groups had already dropped, and there were explosions allover the drop zone, which was now host to a large brush fire. With the green light, all of the paratroopers left the plane without hesitation. I always had a lot of respect for paratroopers but it was never higher than when they dropped into that preview of hell. There was no hesitation on our part, either. When the last man was out the door, the throttles were pushed to the firewall and we dove for the deck.

1st Lieutenant William E. Bruce
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

The next day we took the British to their drop zone west of Arnhem. I could tell before we got to the drop zone that they were going to be in big trouble. You could see mortar bursts hitting the ground all over the drop zone. It was not just one or two, it was multiple mortars. It could have been mortars or guns, probably both. You could see it peppering the ground all around. You could tell there was going to be trouble. The Germans were ready the second day, but not as ready as they were the third or fourth, and never mind the fifth.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry G. Hamby
Commander, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

I didn't have much personal contact with the Polish paratroopers. They impressed me as being mad as hell at the Germans. Nice guys, but I felt that they had a personal grudge, and were eager to get on with what they had to do. They didn't speak my language and I didn't speak theirs. They were friendly to be around, shake hands and all that sort of stuff.

2nd Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer ("Doc")
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

We had two or three guys in the squadron who spoke Polish, but the problem was that most of us couldn't talk to them, they couldn't talk to us and we're all sitting there in the airplane, waiting, waiting, and waiting. The weather was awful, and the drop was canceled the first day. Captain Sitarz and a few others spoke Polish, and were communicating with the Polish paratroopers. They were getting pissed off, and the rest of us couldn't explain to them what's going on. When it was canceled a second time, they were really pissed. They wanted to fight, they wanted to get over there and fight. Some of them thought that we didn't want to take them or something.

1st Lieutenant William E. Bruce
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

They scrubbed the flight for the Poles on September 19th, and the Polish paratroopers were very, very upset. One of them pulled a knife on Captain Sitarz and went after him. It happened very fast, and the two were pulled apart. I guess he went after Sitarz because he represented some kind of authority. He was not making an idle gesture. There was blood in his eye.

Anonymous

I couldn't figure the Polish paratroopers out. During the hours waiting to takeoff, some of them played an odd version of mumblety-peg where one would sit on the ground with his legs spread, and his buddies would flip their commando knives into the ground, seeing who could get closest to the man's crotch.

They really wanted to go. I think that they would have gone if they had to jump at 200 feet, and go in with

their bare hands. After the takeoff was canceled the second day, one Polish paratrooper was so distraught that he shot himself next to the airplane. I couldn't believe what I saw next, there's this dead guy lying there, and his comrades didn't even look at him, except to throw cigarette butts and trash at him.

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

They seemed to be pretty enthusiastic about getting over there and into the middle of it. It was a real disappointment each day when we couldn't get off the ground.

Captain Julius H. Petersen
Pilot, 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

I got back from leave in the States on the 20th. The planes were all lined up to take off. They had been that way all day, and this was the middle of the afternoon. Then the Polish lift was called off. All the jeeps and trucks were coming in, and Smylie was there. I said, "Gee Smylie, I wish I could go with you, I haven't flown for three months." He says, "You're damn right you're gonna come." I should have kept my mouth shut.

21 SEPTEMBER 1944

2nd Lieutenant Robert L. Cloer
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

The weather was lousy again the following day, September 21. I remember that we were briefed that if we could get under it, there wouldn't be much of a problem. We took *off* and got into formation, no problem. We started and the farther we went, the lower the clouds got. Pretty soon we were right down on the treetops, and we're in this stuff, and being buffeted with a lot of prop wash. We did the instrument dispersion, 15 degrees for a certain number of seconds. IfI remember right, we didn't break out until 8500 feet. We had climbed at a pretty good rate, the pilot was going to get up as fast as he could. We poked out up there, and he kept climbing. All over the whole sky, they looked like bugs popping out of a mattress. They were coming up everywhere. The lead ship started firing flares, but then there was supposed to be a recall for everybody, but Hamby and those two squadrons didn't get it. Most of our guys did, a few from the 43rd didn't, and went on. When we landed, the crew chief suggested that we stay up front until the paratroopers were gone. He said that they were in a pretty foul mood.

1st Lieutenant William M. Perkins
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

A lot of what happened was that you really couldn't do formation flying, and we couldn't get through the thick clouds. A lot of them just broke formation and returned. Only the flight leader had a navigator. The rest of the aircrews were just flying on their wingmen, so to speak. That meant that two-thirds of the planes did not have a navigator, and they really didn't know where the drop zone would be. When you are flying off the wing, you are watching that wing all the time, and you really don't know where you are.

2nd Lieutenant Charles Voegelin
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

The third day was also a very bad weather day. I didn't get through. At the time we were 2nd lieutenants. Somebody was making the decisions for us to take off, and we knew damn well you couldn't do it. It was such an extreme weather condition. Cook and I took off with that group of the 43rd, and finally they canceled the mission. The radio operator told me we're canceled,

What do you do? I'm up at 12,000 feet. We were supposed to get on top, and form on top, but I didn't see a soul. I'm up here now and I had to figure out how do get back safely. I just let down slowly over the North Sea, and I was scared. We were using my radio altimeter, which I had set to 50 feet.

When the warning came on I could just see the water, and I took up a heading for the general area of the Wash. Heading in, I had very limited visibility ahead of me. I had the six containers under the airplane, and a load of Polish paratroopers. I'm just coming across the coastline and the co-pilot asked what I was going to do. I told him, "Get ready to put the gear down as soon as I yell, and any runway I see, we're going straight in," and we did.

We landed at an American bomber field, and these people never saw a C-47 with those white containers underneath, looking like torpedoes. Were surrounded by heavily armed military police, who thought we were enemy commandos or something. It was a B-17 field, and we spent the night there

The Polish paratroopers were so disappointed. They were completely befuddled and frightened, but just

wanted to get over there and fight instead of being back in England. All they wanted to do was kill Germans. They really meant it, with knives or any way they possibly could.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry G. Hamby
Commander, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Our serial took off an hour later. I took off first, leading the second serial and told all of my following crews what I was going to do - to climb at 500 feet per minute, making a left turn every 1,000 feet until they broke out of the clouds. I would be on top flying a box pattern until all had joined the formation. In effect I said, "I'll meet you on top of the overcast." The overcast was about 800 feet above the ground, and about 2,000 feet thick. When I got up on top and started circling to the left, the others were doing the same thing. They would break out, know that I was up there making circles and they catch up to me. It wasn't too long before we had them all. My navigator was standing on a stool and looking out, counting the airplanes. He told me when they were all there, and that's when we headed for Holland.

Flight Officer Robert o. Cook
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

We had real low ceiling on the day we dropped the Polish paratroopers. We had to wait a couple days because of bad weather before we finally got off the ground and there were only two planes in the 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron that made the flight.

I put the crew chief on a stool in the astrodome and told him to be sure to holler if he saw anything. As we were going up, a B-17 was letting down, and my crew chief fell off the stool. He was as white as a sheet. He said, "We were so close to that B-17 that I could see the 50 caliber shells in the ball turret. If I pulled up, we would have probably crashed.

Anyway, we broke out and the orders were that if we got lost or something, we were to hook up to another group and fly in. So we broke out at about 8,000 feet and we went up to about 9,000 feet and tied on to another group.

There was a lieutenant jumpmaster, Polish, he but could speak some English. I told him what the problem was and he'd be dropping with his troops, and when he'd get on the ground he could get coordinated. Anyway, we dropped those boys, took a few hits, and they told us to go to fly down this corridor to Brussels. That's what we did.

Captain Julius H. Petersen
Pilot, 309th Troop Carrier Squadron

When we got to the drop zone it was all afire. There was really a shootout going on there. Smylie Stark was standing up, and I was flying. Smylie was taking pictures. He was standing on the pilot's seat, looking down with his camera. He finally he got a little nervous. He turned around and said, "I'll take it now, Pete." We had dropped our troops, and we made a diving turn to the right. We got down on a canal, and the damned banks of the canal were higher than the plane. We were zipping down the canal and they were shooting at us from the top the banks of the canal. As a matter of fact I was looking up at a rifleman, and he was higher than I was.

That's where we were, just skimming the water. And then all of a sudden a bullet went through the instrument panel, and hit Smylie's flak vest, making a hell of a noise. I looked over, and he fell forward on the stick, and I had to pull the stick back to make sure we didn't go down any further.

Colonel Stark was out cold, and his face was bleeding. The navigator Marty Dean, and the crew chief pulled him out of his seat. I told them, you better get him in the back and see what you can do for him."

We took a few more hits, but were still in the air, and it turned out that Smylie was hardly hurt. The flak jacket stopped the bullet, and splinters from the instrument panel had gone through his lips and into his mouth.

Flight Officer Robert O. Cook
Pilot, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron

On the way to Brussels I saw some German ambulances on the right side I was flying at 50 feet off the ground, because our only protection was flying low. We were down low, and moved over a little closer to the German ambulances when some machine guns or something opened up on us and shot the rudder pedal out from under my co-pilot's (Bill Misfeldt) feet.

We went back up and assessed the damage. They hit my instruments: including the gas gauges, and I didn't how much gas I had. We were at 500 feet and still about 90 miles behind the German lines according to my calculations. I told the guys, "You want to jump, go

ahead and jump, but hell as long as these props are turning I'm getting as far away from the German as I can.

We made it to Brussels and fired a red flare for an emergency landing, and they shot a red flare back. So we went around and I'm flying over the city. I went around a second time, shot a red flare and they shot a red flare. I went around a third time, shot a red flare and they shot a red flare back - and I had no idea how much gas we had.

We dropped the gear only to find out that we didn't have any hydraulic pressure. I put the crew chief on the wobble pump and he turned the valve and was pumping, but the main hydraulics line was shot, so we didn't have any brakes. I went in, and the field, B-28, was a rough strip. On the right-hand side there were some C-47s that had already crashed, and were on their bellies. There were two B-17 s and a B- 24 on the end of the runway. If I went straight in we would have crashed and really had a fire, so I tried to ground loop the plane and I gave it full right throttle. There was a bunch of Spitfires on the right hand side, and I went through those damned fighters and missed them all. I jumped the perimeter track and hit a bombed-out hanger, and then hit an I-beam.

I was going about 5 or 10 mph, and it sure ruined that C-47. I grabbed the fire extinguisher right behind me, and got the men out, and we got out all right. A British major jumped out of the tent saying "Good job, lieutenant, good job!"

A colonel from another squadron told us to open the escape kits and take our money, then go to town and find a hotel. That's what we did. The next day another plane took us back home. That was a hell of a trip, but I have to admit, Brussels was a good city to have fun in.

1st Lieutenant Oliver J. Smith ("OJ")
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Another squadron from another outfit came across in front of us and we could see them being shot all to pieces and burning. But we came on in and nothing happened. We slowed down, put out some flaps, cut the left engine and were flying along at 90 mph when the whole ground opened up. You couldn't see for the tracers. We immediately started getting hit. Everyone was getting hit. I saw my right wingman disappear. We got to the drop zone and I turned on the green light and a shell came up through the belly. It was a terrible jolt. I turned around and screamed to the radio operator, "Are they out?" He said, "No, they're all down." The explosion had knocked them off their feet. They got back up and we held until they were all out. Then I put those new engines to good use. I put it wide open and got down below the trees. A plane just ahead of me hit the ground and exploded. I made a right

2nd Lieutenant Richard T. Ford
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Just as I reported the other planes of our formation had cleared the lower airspace, a flak burst exploded beneath the rear of the plane, accompanied by increased fire from the ground. Seconds later, a loud explosion sounded d close to the rear of the aircraft, filling the plane with a strong odor of burned 1 gun powder as though a flak blast had occurred inside the rear fuselage. Immediately, flight controls become useless. OJ moved the control column several times through the full range of rudder and elevator actions without any effect or airstream resistance. Fortunately, after several anxious seconds control pressure returned and they began responding normally.

1st Lieutenant Oliver J. Smith
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

We were going right into a gun emplacement and they were shooting shells as big as steers. The diving is what saved us, because we were losing attitude while he fired, and the shells would go over us. I thought I was going to hit him, and by instinct I reefed back on the stick and I had elevators. I went across the field still trying to get control of the airplane. I wanted to stay below the trees, but I saw power lines.

2nd Lieutenant Richard T. Ford
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

As soon as OJ regained control, he immediately dove for the deck while heavy ground fire continued. German troops continued to concentrate a steady stream of rifle and automatic weapons fire on our single aircraft from positions on roads paralleling our path from about a half mile distant Meanwhile, OJ had pushed both throttles and prop controls to the crash wall and I told him I was easing off to 40" manifold pressure to reduce the load on the engines.

Literally, hundreds of bullets were coming constantly from both sides, but because of our air speed

and grass-high altitude, most missed. They did make an ominous clang while striking the engines, fuselage and wings, but miraculously missing vital areas.

Shortly after we arrived on the deck, OJ asked me to check on the crew. Tuning around to determine their condition, I saw that both the crew chief and radio operator were seriously injured and needed medical attention. OJ instructed me to go back and see what I could do for them while he remained at the controls alone. Lieutenant Provin, the navigator, helped me bring Corporal Doan, the crew chief, to a sitting position above the fuel tanks. He said they had received a direct hit at the cargo door as they attempted to pull in the shroud lines. While Lieutenant Provin stayed forward, I advised OJ that the crew had received a direct shrapnel burst, and that Corporal Doan had lost a finger, and had shrapnel wounds on the side of his head, and was bleeding profusely from his leg. The radio operator, Sergeant James, was hit too, but had dragged himself forward to the wing area without help. OJ saw I had removed my flak jacket and I told him that it was hindering my effort to help Corporal Doan. Between trying to keep Corporal Doan from slipping into deepening shock and to halt the bleeding, I regularly returned to the cockpit to check on OJ and to reduce the manifold pressure once again.

Every time OJ climbed to clear tree rows, top branches and leaves went flying too, but the plane became a clay pigeon from every visible direction. After running this gauntlet for about five minutes, we arrived at one more tree row when I happened to be in the copilot's seat. Upon clipping the tree tips and diving steeply for the ground, we looked ahead directly into a machine
gun position occupied by three soldiers. When they saw our airplane bearing down on them, all three found they were the target instead and frantically tried to climb out of the gun pit. Two managed to escape in one leap, but the third failed and was seen sliding awkwardly back down the side of the pit as we roared past. As OJ and I continued to play throttle tag, he suggested crash landing at Best glider LZ if we located it and then try to escape.

I reminded him I had a wife back home who was pregnant with our first child that I wanted to see. I suggested we try to make the Eindhoven air strip we had spotted on the way in, where heavy equipment was filling in bomb craters. This seemed to be in Allied hands and probably had field medical services for Corporal Doan.

After flying for about 15 minutes trapped in the crossfire between to forces of a German panzer division, firing gradually subsided. However, we agreed that the Germans had probably inflicted more injuries and damage to their own forces than they did to our plane and crew because of the ground level trajectory of opposing small arms fire less than a mile apart.

As we neared Eindhoven, equipment was still working on the runway. OJ made one pass over the field to have Lieutenant Provin fire a red flare signaling injured aboard. With a tight left-hand 360 degree turn OJ tried to come in for a landing as equipment and workers scurried out of the way. OJ wanted a high touchdown speed because of an unknown stalling speed, but neither gear nor flaps would come down. Upon checking the instrument panel, I noticed the airspeed indicator read 250 mph (that is not a misprint We made one more circuit at idle power and the gear came down and locked just before touchdown. When the plane stopped at the other end of the field, we were met by medics of the 101st Airborne Division, who immediately clambered aboard and started a blood transfusion on Corporal Doan before departing with both crewmen for their makeshift hospital.

1st Lieutenant Oliver J. Smith
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

I came roaring in and they shot red flares at me, so I pulled up. That's when discovered that I didn't have any rudder, so I just made aileron turns the navigator came up and jumped in the co-pilot's seat. I got lined up and had him put the gear down, which worked. The British were shooting red flares like crazy to keep us off. I touched down and locked the wheels with the tail in the air.

We started counting holes, but I forgot the number. The shells had come inside and fragments had gone through the roof. I wanted to look at the elevator cables, so we got a screwdriver and pulled the floor plate to have a look, and I almost passed out. There were three itty-bitty wire strands holding the elevator cables together

2nd Lieutenant Richard T. Ford
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Upon deplaning and examining the aircraft, we

counted four flak hits and over 600 holes and jagged openings in skin surfaces, primarily in mid and rear areas, plus bullet dents and scratches on propellers and engines. All tail control wires were frayed and right rudder controls and all trim wiring was severed. The door to the lavatory at the rear of the aircraft was riveted shut by shrapnel fragments and small arms bullets which penetrated the side surfaces.

OJ's flying skills and maneuvering during this brief encounter left no doubt in our minds that he had not only saved the plane, but all our lives as well. With the enlisted crew being safely cared for, the three of us decided to tour the town of Eindhoven and immediately discovered that the three of us were the first American flyers to arrive in the town after it had been liberated. Our presence was rapidly noted and within a few minutes we were met by the town mayor who immediately befriended us and escorted us to his second story apartment. While climbing the stairs, we noticed a 6" hole in one step near the sidewall and pointed to it. He nonchalantly replied that, during the German invasion of their country, a Stuka dive bomber had dropped a bomb which failed to explode and was still in the basement. After meeting his wife and sharing a social drink, we departed after a very brief visit.

After taking in more of the city sights, we returned to the airfield and ate 3-in-l rations in the airplane and began discussing where to spend the night. The airborne troops recommended against staying with the aircraft because it was an inviting target and a Jerry patrol had been fought off at the perimeter of the airfield the previous night. We figured the plane had survived being shot at by a panzer division so we'd take our chances there. At nightfall we opened a parachute for a blanket and laid together on the sloping floor facing the door with 45s beside us and the .30 carbine above our heads. We slept fitfully in the cold while being alert for intruders. Even the airborne stayed clear of our plane that night.

Lieutenant Colonel Henry G. Hamby
Commander, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

Normally, 18 paratroopers would exit a C-47 in about 18 seconds. The Polish troopers had these heavy equipment bags that had to be pushed out the door ahead of each trooper, and it seemed that it took forever. Also, it was normal procedure during the drop to reduce power on the left engine in order to reduce the propwash on the exiting paratroopers. My aircraft lost considerable altitude, and I must have been at 300 feet when the last one: got out. Then we turned to get out of the way. That's what we were supposed to do. I looked out my window on the left side and saw an enemy anti-aircraft gunner aiming at us.

It happened awful fast. I started getting hit almost as soon as the 1ast paratrooper was out. One of the reasons was that we were low to the ground I dropped down, no more than 300 feet. The first round hit the left engine which stopped it from hitting me. We took two more hits, and everybody but me was wounded, the worst was the crew chief, who had his butt blown off My navigator used compresses to help stem the blood flow. I knew that I had to land, and thought about Eindhoven, which had just been captured, but didn't know what kind of medical assistance I could expect there, so I went on to Brussels, which was not that much further. The place was awful busy. I shot a red flare, and an ambulance met us when I landed The crew chief was the only one who had to be taken off on a litter. The rest of the crew were able to walk, and in fact helped with the litter.

1st Lieutenant Monroe Zartman
310th Troop Carrier Squadron

It was 0+5 of Operation Market Garden. I was assigned old "622," crew chief Drysdale's C-47 and my favorite Gooney. We ground through the soup to get to the top. Len Thomas was in the right seat, and in the back were 22 troopers from the Polish Parachute Brigade. We all saw the sun for the first time in several days as we broke out. Major General Sosabowski and his men had been dealt a bad hand; fog and storm delays, misinterpreted in-flight coded messages, and just several hours before takeoff, a change in DZ. A truly SNAFU mission was unfolding

Coming up on the IP, the lead plane's Aldis lamp flashed red, signaling that was time to "stand up and hook up," and then it quickly switched to the green light. Ever so slowly the Poles tumbled into the murk, each overburdened with a heavy duffle bag of ammunition and equipment attached to his leg. By the time the last man in the stick was out, we had been in drop mode for

the longest minute of my life.

When the crew chief signaled that the last man had passed the tailwheel and that the static lines were in, I eased the props to 2350 and shoved the throttles to 35 inches. The IAS zoomed toward the red line as we dove for the deck.

Len was brandishing the "grease gun" from our escape and evasion kit. Our first target was six to eight Nazi grunts near a red building. Startled, they tried to unsling their guns as Len's .45 slugs traced a spatter on the wall behind them. All of them hit the dirt, but we couldn't be certain that they were hit. But I guarantee that their JI Gerry Issue) shorts were marked with something besides indelible laundry ink.

Intent on finding targets of opportunity, I goofed and got too close to an enemy flak tower. Fortunately, I think that we were so low that they never saw us. A due west heading kept us on the Axis side of the front all the way to the North Sea, and we expected lots of targets. Not so! We did fire on two machine gun nests. Bewildered, possibly wounded, they never got off a shot.

The fog thickened fast over the sea, and after two encounters, one with a fishing boat in the mist, and the other with a seagull, we went up on top. During the climb, we assessed our damage. We found a bad dent on the right side of the fuselage. Len, psyche piqued while reloading, inserted an empty clip and threw a full clip out the window! It ricocheted off the prop.

By now England was really socked in. Getting back to the airfield before the fuel needles pointed to four zeroes became a concern. We discarded our flak helmets and vests, including the two folded vests that I was sitting on. Sometimes we'd catch a glimpse of the cold, dark, choppy sea below while we were warm and calm, lulled by the rhythmic cadence of the Pratt and Whitney "horses." We approached the coast of England, and started to let down over the water. Abruptly, the barrage balloon noises started humming in our earphones, and shortly became very intense and very scary. We fled back, out to sea. My blue eyes gradually reddened in a focal frenzy between the artificial horizon, the radio altimeter, and the misty view out the cockpit window. Just short of the moment of panic, we found ourselves zooming over the whitecaps. Not exactly VFR, but enough visibility and altitude to keep the salt spray off of the windshield.

Careful not to dip a wing too low, we made a 180, and shortly spotted the barren beaches of the isles north of the Thames. Turning up the coast, I ordered Len to stop filing notches in the E&E gun and take the controls. For some reason my hands were sweating, so I dried my gloves using the pilot's defroster. Scanning the gauges, I noted that both AUX tanks read zero, and we had been flying on the MAINS for some time. I began to ponder my options. Even a gear down landing on the beach, with the tide and salt water, would give Drysdale conniptions. He was one of the few crew chiefs in the squadron that didn't report to sick call when I was scheduled to fly their plane.

Another choice was to turn on the autopilot, head out to sea, and bail out. The prospect of bouncing in a raft on a cold menacing sea caused my goose humps to go out of control. With a shivering hand, I switched the radio to I he distress channel, a third and better option.

Immediately a voice repeating, "YANK DAKOTA ... IF YOU NEED HELP, KINDLY CALL DARKY." A coastal spotter had already reported us as in trouble, and DARKY, the emergency network in Britain, had been trying to contact us.

I came back with, "YANK DAKOTA HERE ... HAVE YOU A VECTOR FOR US? They replied, "YANK DAKOTA, CLIMB TO 2,000 FEET AND STEER 3-1-5 DEGREES TO THE NEAREST FIDO [Fog Investigation and Dispersal Opeation] BASE, OVER."

I "wilco"d and Len executed a climbing 360, rolling out to a northwest heading. We hadn't cruised five minutes when an orange glow appeared ahead. A little closer and the glow took on the rectangular shape of a runway. I look the wheel and we went into a hasty landing mode. I got "gear down and locked" from Len, requested *3/4* flaps, and cracked my side window to get some air. Excited, I failed to remember that you should delay landing until initial heavy black diesel smoke dispersed. Leveling off in the heavy smoke between two rows of flame and little forward visibility, Len informed me I was too high. I began "walking" 622 down with tail wiggles and power bursts, and WHAM! We hit HARD ... hard enough to require a form 781 entry for the plane, and a tube of hemorrhoid cream in addition to the shot of whiskey from the flight surgeon.

A "Follow Me" jeep appeared, and I unlocked the tail wheel and tailgated the jeep to the parking ramp. As I set the parking brake, Len and the crew evacuated the plane so fast that I suspected we were on fire. I shut down in four seconds flat, and wa:s right out with them.

On the ramp, Len Tomas was on his knees, facing the general direction of Mecca and kissing the ground. As I watched, he leaped up to sexually harass the WAAF driving the lorry that was to take us to Ops. With the entire crew looking on, he hugged and kissed the innocent driver through the open cab window. He seemed unusually happy to be safe on the ground. This puzzled me, acting as if he had been doomed when scheduled to fly with his old buddy. The next day at Spanhoe, we would learn that it had been an uncanny extrasensory reaction; his regular crew had been shot down with no survivors.

2nd Lieutenant Leonard S. Thomas
Pilot, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

I suppose that he didn't tell you that he "landed" 35 feet in the air, and that we fell the last 35 feet? When I was flying with Zartman, I was always asking him, "What are you trying to do? Kill me?" With Ziggy it was always very colorful. If I had gone on that mission with my regular crew, I wouldn't be here.

2nd Lieutenant James R. Wilson ("Junior")
Navigator, 310th Troop Carrier Squadron

On this particular day we had weather delay. We took off, and I remember that when we got to 10,000 a lot turned back, I think the majority of them. We finally got together and went on in, and I actually think we didn't get any ground fire anywhere on our course, maybe rifle fire, but you can't see that. Anyway, you might say it was quiet. We came in and everything was all right, I think we were the number two ship out of nine ships. We were on the right flank, by the railroad line, the second nine-ship element. We were all in beautiful formation and ready to drop, and we came on in and then everything erupted.

I mean fire from every direction. That DZ had mortar fire hitting the ground all over the place. I looked up and saw flak cars on that railroad track and they had 40mms, and they were firing directly at us. Well, the troopers got out, and it looked to me like that there was a mortar landing every six feet. I couldn't believe that any of that Polish outfit could survive from what I saw

It was a normal drop at 700 feet. We were to do a ninety after the troopers were out. It looked like everything went well, and the troopers got out of the nine planes in front of us, and then we completed our drop, and then it looked like all the Gooney Birds ahead of us did a hard right. It looked like every one of them was being shot down. They looked like elephants rolling around in the sky.

I was standing behind the pilot like I always did. We hit the deck and did a 180 on instruments. I had no concept of time, but we flew for a while, just clearing the trees. We pulled up a little bit and there was a road off to our light, and everybody was shooting at us. I remember an armored car shooting straight at us, and we were being hit. The pilot turned to me and said, "GET OUT!" I went back and told the radio operator and crew chief to get out. Then the co-pilot came and told us to get out, that the controls were shot away.

The crew chief was reluctant, but jumped. The radio operator told me to go first and I ran the length of the cabin, gripping the ripcord handle. I saw no fire on the airplane, but there were holes all over the place. As I ran, I saw a hole the size of my hand suddenly appear where the crew chief had been standing. We must have been at 300 feet and as I tumbled through the air I saw curving tracers everywhere, all looking as if they were coming at me. The chute popped, and I landed hard in a dry canal bed, some five feet deep, and the chute collapsed perfectly in the canal.

The next thing I know, the radio operator was running across the field, straight at me. I was a little chapped that if anybody was watching, he would have led the them straight to me. I got tangled up in the shroud lines of my parachute, but that was just nervousness. After a few minutes we started walking along the canal bed. After some 150-200 yards, the canal came to a, "T," with a large, water-filled canal. We just stood there and looked at the empty foxholes dug into its sides. Then we heard this big racket, a lot of sloshing of water. I had my .45, the radio operator had his stuck in his pocket, and of course lost it when his chute opened. I had my .45 ready, but saw that it was the crew chief. We sat down and talked, and buried our billfolds in the side of the canal.

We walked up the canal a little, and up the slope. There were some trees in the distance, and an elevated road between us and the trees. There were no houses or anything, just some pole beans growing in the middle of the field. We crawled across the flats, made it to the bean field, then sat there and decided that we should try for the trees. We started crawling across the field on our bellies. We were 50 yards out in the middle of it when two Germans on bicycles come down that road. One had

a rifle, the other a Schmeisser machine pistol. They stopped and lit up cigarettes while the three of us lay in a depression some 6 inches deep, with our noses in the dirt.

My companions both wanted me to get rid of my .45 and surrender. I said no, but they started moaning that I was going to get them killed. Here I was, a 2nd lieutenant, all of 19 years old. They were technical sergeants, a few years older than me, and they had spent those years overseas. Hell, nobody wants to die, but I didn't want to surrender, but I finally pulled a white hanky out of my pocket and started waving it 6 inches above the ground. The Germans were smoking their cigarettes, and took no notice. They told me to wave it again, and I put it up a couple of inches, and then a few more inches. Finally I got up on one elbow and waved my arm straight in the air. This time I got the Germans' attention. They ripped the cigarettes out of their mouths, hopped on their bicycles and took off

We went back to the canal and moved along until we came to a small bridge. It was dark by then, and we heard whistling from time to time, and it was getting closer. It would be at one place when we heard it, and a few minutes later it came from some place else, getting closer and closer. We figured that the damned Germans knew where we were. We were shaking with shock and the cold, and my head hurt, and the whistling came closer. All of a sudden a man drops into the canal. It was a young Dutchman with a bottle of wine, a loaf of bread, and a hunk of cheese. The radio operator could speak German, so I told him to talk to the Dutchman. After about 10-12 minutes of conversation, I asked what was going on. The radio operator told me they were talking about how cold Chicago gets in the winter. I exploded.

The Dutchman told us to wait there, and that he would be back to get us Now we became afraid that he was going to get the Germans, but he did come back, and led us to a nearby farmhouse. We went in, it was dark, but we could see an old woman sitting there, and then I saw a man in a uniform with a shiny visor looking straight at me. My first thought was that, "the SOB turned us in!" But it turned out to be the co-pilot, "Moose" Worley. In the middle of the night they took us to another farm, and told us to forget these peoples' names. I'm good at forgetting so I did. I am sorry that I don't remember now. Many times over the years I thought about those people and wanted to thank them. We were hidden there in a barn for three days until Allied tanks came through.

We were taken to Nijmegen, and after a few more days, back to Spanhoe We arrived there, and MPs swooped down on us, two for each of us, and told us not to talk to anybody. They did let me get back to my hut, but you know how those things go, there was nothing in my footlocker, and my clothes had been passed around. We were sent to London to be debriefed, and then shipped out of the theater.

Captain Carl Fittkau
Navigator, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron
Journal entry - Monday, September 25, 1944

We were briefed for an airborne landing today but came of it. We are to fly men and supplies to a 4,200 foot grass landing field at Oud Keent, two miles west of Grave. We'll have 36 planes and I'm flying lead ship with Colonel Lyon. Drew the maps after dinner and went to bed early.

1st Lieutenant Richard L. Adams
Pilot, 34th Troop Carrier Squadron

The airborne landing was on the 26th. That was weird. It was in a dry river bed, that made almost a "U". You came in one side, went up to the corner and dumped your load. You took off going almost 180 degrees of the way you came in. Not quite 180, but more like 210. You weren't coming in directly to the traffic.

It was kind of a strange situation. Here you are there in Holland, behind enemy lines. We had flak jackets, and each airplane had a Thompson submachine gun. We had the back doors off, and taped up, and the crew chief or radio operator was laying back there with the Tommy Gun having a ball.

We went over in formation, broke off, went into a landing pattern, land, taxi up, cut the left engine. . I think that I had a jeep, and some kind of a gin on wheels, and four paratroopers. To get the jeep out, you had to lift it and twist it a little. We weren't on the ground just a few minutes, and we were gone. All you could see above the traffic pattern was fighters. Man, I don't think that a bird could get in there if they didn't want him.

When we took off, we never got above 2-300 feet. We just headed off when we turned around. When we took off it was about 210 degrees when we took off. It was a strange feeling but we took it in stride. It took a

lot less time than I figured it would. As you come up to the turn there, that's where you stopped and unloaded. All you do was just cut your left engine. The planes were basically lined up nose to tail while unloading. Those mothers were out of there in 3-5 minutes, and then we were gone - off and running.

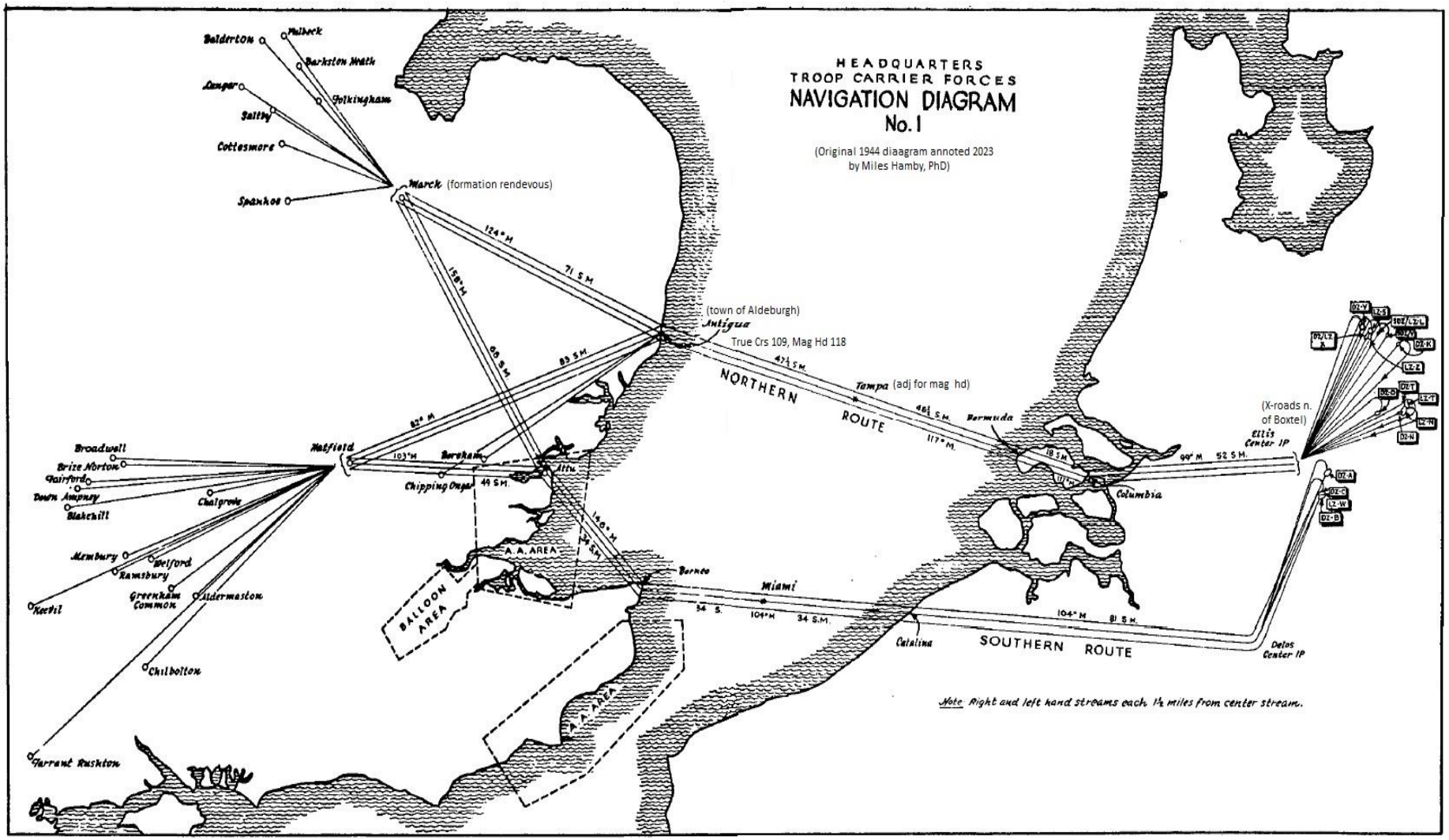
Captain Carl Fittkau
Navigator, 43rd Troop Carrier Squadron
Journal Entry - Tuesday, September 26, 1944

On the flight line at eight this morning, but the weather reports were terrible. It was off and on until about ten when it looked as though the mission would be scrubbed. Picked up after that, and we got off shortly after eleven. Despite low clouds and scud, no navigation problems and position confirmed at the Dutch coast by Spits and mustangs which went all the way in. Fighters most welcome. They cleaned out a lot of flak Sunday (I 7th) which probably saved us a lot of trouble, and didn't in the drop zone on the l8th, a factor in the heavy casualties. Artillery duels on either side of the corridor going in, but I don't think that they were shooting at us. On target for the landing, no problems, although small arms fire was annoying as we slowed up on the approach leg. At any rate, it reinforced our decision to get in and out as fast as possible. Landing area looked like controlled bedlam with planes all over the place and more coming in at 30 second intervals. It was well organized though. Our crew helped to unload and we took off pronto again over small arms fire, but fortunately at much better speed. No flak on the way out and the mission wasn't particularly rough though. Maybe we were lucky because we heard some of the ships from the other Groups were shot up. Got back late and the intelligence officer, Captain McRae, God bless him, had coffee and sandwiches at the debriefing. Lot of chatter; happy group since this was the softest one we've had in this set of missions. Orders came down from Wing today giving us 25 hours per mission, which will boost our overseas flying time.

There was a feeling of general satisfaction that maybe we had done some good by getting this stuff to guys who were putting up a helluva fight. I know it did much to relieve the frustration which was building up as a result a series of aborted missions in the previous week, during which several attempts to get through were blocked by the weather - at times a more formidable enemy that the Germans.

— End of Chapter —

(Above) Iconic photo of the troop carriers – the 315th TCG dropping the 82nd Airborne Div. on.DZ "O" near Grave on 17 September '44 between glider serials depicted on the ground, towed by a previous troop carrier group. (The 315th trained with but never towed gliders in combat.) Photo probably taken by combat photographer that landed with the gliders.
Photo from https://315group.org



(Above) A copy of the original, period Navigation Diagram from 1944, (annotated in 2023 to clarify the checkpoints) depicting the northern and southern navigation routes for the respective troop carrier groups to their DZs. These routes and checkpoints were used several times throughout operation Market during September 1944 for the various drops. The 315th TCS departed Spanhoe (top left cluster, bottom spoke), assembled at point “March”, then proceeded SE to the coast of England at point “Antigua”, across the North Sea to landfall in Holland at point “Bermuda”, to “Columbia”, then E to the IP point “Ellis”, then to DZ “O” (on 14 Sep 44 to drop the 504th PIR, 82nd Airborne Div.), DZ “Y” (on 18 Sep 44 to drop the 1st British Airborne Brigade), and DZ at Driel (on 21 Sep 44 to drop the 1st Polish Parachute Brigade).

(Above) 34th Squadron "NM" C-47, one of the 209 aircraft involved in Market Garden that landed or crashed behind enemy lines on September 26, 1944.
Photo from https://315group.org

(Above) Members of the 1st Polish Independent Parachute Brigade with a member of the 315th TCG (in front, bottom row) *Photo courtesy of G. Cholewczynski*

(Right) Copy of 1994 Smithsonian magazine photo and article about the Market Garden paradrop in 1944. Top caption reads "In September 1944, Dutch villagers and a policeman watch gliders [the four stacked on the left behind their respective towing C-47s] carrying units of the 82nd Airborne Division toward a target behind German lines."
Photo from https://315group.org


In September 1944 Dutch villagers and a policeman watch gliders carrying units of the 82d Airborne Division toward a target behind the German lines.

"Smithsonian" magazine, June 1994, page 133. "Crossing the lines on silent wings," by Kathleen McAuliffe.

(Above) After the beautiful weather on the first day of Operation MARKET, conditions deteriorated progressively. The British lift was delayed for hours, the Polish lift for days.
Photo by 315th veteran M. Zartman

(Above) 34th TCS "NM" C-47 loading British paratroops.

Photo by-315th veterans R. Schwartz / R. Pohlman

(Below) British paratroopers of the 4th Parachute Brigade preparing to load onto a 310th Squadron "4A" C-47 for Market-Garden. The first man on the left is Brigadier Hackett, the Commanding Officer.

Photo from https://315group.org.

(Above) 309th member Jack Wilson's C-47 after landing at Graves, Holland, in resupply effort for Operation Market Garden. Graves was only a few miles from the Arnhem bridge, the "bridge too far".

Photo from https://315group.org